



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



FIRST DAKOTA MILITIA GUIDON TO BE DISPLAYED DURING THE SDNG'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

South Dakota Army National Guard member, 1st Sgt. Kory Urban, came upon the First Dakota Cavalry guidon flown by the first South Dakota militia at the Dakotaland Museum in Huron. Urban, of Huron's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion, was attending a fundraiser at the museum in January, and during a conversation with the curator, Rachel Farrel, he learned that the First Dakota Cavalry guidon is part of an exhibit there.

Since the SDNG is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, Urban asked Farrel if the museum would loan the guidon to the SDNG to display around the state. "It might have been a long shot, but because the museum staff understands the significance and history behind the flag, they were happy to grant us this honor," said Urban.

The guidon was donated to the museum by one of Beadle County's first settlers, the Miner family. On January 27, 1862, Capt. Nelson Miner organized a military company in Yankton, while the regular Army was called to the Civil War. The unit was mustered into service of the United States as Company A, Dakota Cavalry. The primary mission for the cavalry was to protect the settlers in the region.

Being a soldier today is different than it was 150 years ago, but the sacrifices made by soldiers and their families continue to be a challenge, said Urban. Many years have passed since the First Dakota Cavalry guidon represented the soldiers within its ranks and now it will be showcased at Joint Force Headquarters at Camp Rapid in Rapid City as part of the SDNG's 150th anniversary celebration on June 9.



Inside this issue:

New Recruits Needed	2
Guards Participate in Substance Abuse Training	3
SDNG Receives U.S. Forest Service Award	4
Champions of Change	5
Easter Egg Hunt	5
114th Mobilized	6
Upcoming Events	7

NEW RECRUITS NEEDED DESPITE SMALLER GUARD FORCE

Although the South Dakota Army National Guard is reducing the number of soldiers in its force structure, Guard officials say there is still a need for new recruits.

In December, the SDARNG announced it would trim its force of nearly 3,400 soldiers by 258 traditional-Guard positions and 19 full-time positions by Sept. 30. Despite the cutbacks, the Guard is still seeking new members to join its ranks.

"Even though we are reducing the force, we project that we will lose additional soldiers due to retirements, transfers and separations," said Lt. Col. Joseph Jacobson, who oversees the Guards recruiting and retention efforts throughout the state. "We continue to recruit new soldiers to replace the projected losses. It is always good to have new people to help build the future of the South Dakota Army National Guard." According to Jacobson, SDARNG recruiters have been through their ups and downs during the past ten years when it comes to citizens interested in serving in the Guard. "There was a huge amount of patriotism and a lot of people interested in joining the military following 9/11," said Jacobson. "Interest in the Guard stabilized once we began deploying units to Iraq and Afghanistan, but we have consistently stayed at or above our recruiting goal the entire time."

In a strained U.S. economy and with troop reductions on the horizon, Jacobson said now is a great time for South Dakotans to join the Guard. "There are so many careers in the Guard to choose from now compared to the time when I joined in 1988," said Jacobson. "Soldiers are specializing in career fields such as engineering, communications and aviation, which easily transfer into a civilian career. With all of these opportunities, there is no better time to join."

As the SDARNG continues to recruit and provide new opportunities for South Dakotans, the Guard's Recruitment Sustainment Program is helping citizens adjust to the military lifestyle successfully. Guard recruiters have been able to focus on better qualified new recruits than previous years because of the success of the RSP.

"We have cut the number of soldiers who drop out of basic training in half, and we have had more soldiers graduate as an honor graduate or as a distinguished honor graduate because of RSP," said Jacobson. "The program ensures the soldiers we enlist will successfully graduate basic training." The RSP recruiters have trained more than 2,530 recruits since the program was implemented in the spring of 2005. The program is available to all new recruits joining the SDARNG to ensure they are mentally and physically fit for the rigors of basic combat training. "We are preparing them for basic training to make the transition from citizen to Soldier easier," said Sgt. 1st Class Grant Serna, senior RSP noncommissioned officer in charge.

Jacobson said he is optimistic about the future of the SDARNG. "Our young soldiers are not serving anymore just for the benefits; they are serving for the right reasons such as patriotism, selfless service and wanting to give back," said Jacobson. "That says a lot about this young generation that is labeled as the 'me generation,' which is not true of our RSP soldiers. "Even though the National Guard is reducing its force structure, we still need quality new recruits throughout the state. The future of the Guard will be this new generation of citizen-soldiers."



GUARDSMEN RECEIVE TRAINING TO HELP PREVENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Members of the South Dakota Army National Guard Counterdrug program held Unit Prevention Leader training at the 196th Regional Training Institute March 26-30. Forty-seven members of the SDARNG and one member of the U.S. Army Reserve attended the training. As a certified UPL, each representative will be able to take the information learned from the class and share it with other soldiers in their respective units to help prevent, educate, and monitor substance use and abuse.

"Our UPL training falls in line with Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch's second priority of 'Readiness,'" said Maj. Robert DeJong, Counterdrug coordinator. "Our newly trained UPL's now have the training, knowledge and confidence to conduct substance abuse testing at their units and be their respective commander's advisor on substance abuse training."

Another portion of the training consisted of "Team Readiness" training, which is training on how to educate other soldiers about stress management, coping skills, teamwork and communication skills in relation to substance abuse.

"Team readiness is all about helping Soldier's make good decisions about substance use by using the skills they gain from these classes, which in turn affects unit readiness and safety," said Master Sgt. April Wollan, substance abuse prevention coordinator for the Counterdrug program.

"The training helps to build unit morale and cohesion by having interaction between Soldiers.



Participants in the class also heard from Staff Sgt. Justin Pederson, an intelligence analyst for the FBI Drug Task Force within the Counterdrug program, about the drugs that are affecting our soldiers and their families the most. They saw first-hand what some of the drugs and paraphernalia look like.

Participants were also informed about synthetic drugs. Pederson emphasized the importance of knowing what the drug looks like, the warning signs of using synthetic drugs and how to identify a user. "Knowing what synthetic drugs look like will allow for leadership to be able to identify any soldiers who maybe using synthetic drugs," said Pederson. "Synthetic drugs, like all drugs, destroy the readiness of not only the soldier that is using them, but the entire unit."

The five-day class ended with participants gaining a new outlook on the war on drugs and how soldiers can be affected by it and acquiring the tools to help prevent, educate and lead other soldiers to make the right decisions about substance abuse.

"South Dakota consistently has one of the lowest illegal positive drug rates in the nation, which is a direct reflection of our UPL's taking this additional duty seriously," said DeJong. "Being drug free supports the adjutant general's vision of being the most professional, competent and reliable state National Guard organization in the United States of America."

SDNG RECEIVES U.S. FOREST SERVICE AWARD

The South Dakota Army National Guard has received the "Partner of the Year" award from the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service for their partnership and support to the Black Hills National Forest. "For the past 27 years, the South Dakota Army National Guard and the Black Hills National Forest have worked hand-in-hand to produce an extremely effective partnership that greatly benefits the training of today's military, provides for the care and maintenance of natural resources, and enhances the public's experience in the forest," said Craig Bobzien, Black Hills National Forest supervisor. According to Bobzien, the SDNG was nominated for its contributions in providing resource protection and improvement, recreational facilities construction, and promoting the health and safety of the forest.

"I congratulate the South Dakota Army National Guard for earning and receiving this award. I have the utmost respect and admiration for the professionalism, dedication and determination of our National Guard Soldiers," said Gov. Dennis Daugaard. "They not only know how to do the job, they get it done and do it well – no matter if it's interacting with the National Forest Service, helping fight Missouri River flooding, or serving our nation in the war against terrorism."

The Rocky Mountain Region award encompasses a five-state area, which includes Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Nebraska. Nominations for this award come from National Forest Service units in the region that partner with organizations, individuals or conservation groups that provide a mutual benefit to each other.

"Our partnership is one that not only serves each other, but the land and the people in remarkable ways," said Bobzien. "Resource rehabilitation, resource improvement, public understanding and humanitarian assistance are a few of the ways the public also benefits from this partnership."

The most notable display of this partnership is during the SDNG's annual training exercise known as Golden Coyote. Since 1984, the Guard has conducted this major, joint-force exercise in the Black Hills National Forest. It is one of the few exercises held in the nation on federal land for the purpose of training soldiers. In exchange for training experience, the Guard has provided equipment and military expertise to perform various projects and tasks for the forest. Soldiers and U.S. Forest Service employees experience the mutual benefit of working together and caring for the public lands. "The partnership forged decades ago with the Black Hills National Forest has provided countless opportunities to enhance the readiness of the South Dakota National Guard," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general for the SDNG. "This partnership also allows the Guard to help maintain and rebuild parts of the forest to be enjoyed by the public for generations to come."

In 2011, the Guard improved numerous water crossings, dredged ponds and constructed water channel repairs and improvements. The Guard also constructed road and trail bridges, built parking lots at recreation facilities, and constructed wooden informational kiosks to educate the public. To help promote the safety of the forest, the Guard demolished a decaying building, removed construction materials associated with a recreation house, made various road improvements, and cleaned up and closed an unauthorized shooting area. The partnership has also helped to provide humanitarian assistance to Native American Reservations. During the past six years, the National Guard has loaded, hauled, and distributed wood from the Black Hills National Forest to tribes on the Pine Ridge, Oglala and Crow Creek Reservations.

"The humanitarian mission helps reduce the fuel load on the forest, as well as provide much needed wood for heating for Native Americans," said Bobzien. In 2011 alone, the firewood mission provided 500 cords of wood for heating purposes to 10 locations on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Since the program was initiated, more than 1,000 semi-truck loads and 2,300 cords of wood have been distributed. "The National Guard has proven to be an incredible partner of the National Forest; a partnership that continues to serve the Black Hills National Forest and the American people," said Bobzien.

CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE: VIETNAM VETERANS

This May, OPE will host a “Champions of Change” event for Vietnam Veterans to highlight individuals within the veterans community, especially those who served in Vietnam, that have shown continued support for efforts to end veterans homelessness, boost veterans employment, treat problems with substance abuse and develop treatment programs for those dealing with PTSD. For example, a champion's work may entail:

- Developing a program to provide homeless veterans with food and find assistance with housing.
- Retraining unemployed veterans in innovative vocational training.
- Managing substance abuse programs with proven success records.
- Finding innovative ways to treat veterans affected by PTSD.

Each week, the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) hosts an event to honor those who are “Winning the Future” and further empower and inspire other members of their respective communities. Agency representatives and White House Policy Offices participate in the events and host discussions on amplifying best practices learned in each area.

Please follow the link below to the White House website and fill out the webform information if you would like to nominate someone as a Champion of Change.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/webform/white-house-champions-change-vietnam-veterans>



EASTER EGG HUNT AT VETERANS HOME

This weekend's warm weather brought out a crowd of children and parents, as well as residents from the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, for the annual Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Easter Egg Hunt. Children of various age groups hunted for hundreds of plastic eggs filled with prizes and candy.

Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home has hosted this annual Easter egg hunt for numerous years.

Young or old, we all enjoy a visit from the Easter Bunny and a little chocolate!!!!!!



114TH FIGHTER WING MOBILIZED

South Dakotans gathered at the Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls this week for the activation ceremony for 31 members of the South Dakota Air National Guard 114th Security Forces Squadron. The 114th will be deploying to Southwest Asia for six months.

For the next six months, the security forces members will be providing law enforcement, troop escort and security work within a base in southwest Asia. They demonstrate their commitment to the nation as they prepare to leave behind their families and friends. For some of these airmen, it's their first deployment and some have deployed numerous times. These airmen took center stage as Senators John Thune and Tim Johnson, Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG, thanked them for their dedication and commitment as well as thanked the families for the sacrifices they are making.

April marks the nation's "Month of the Military Child," a time to honor our state's military youth who have been impacted by deployments. South Dakota's Operation Military Kids (OMK) is inviting everyone to join in and show their support by being part of the "Purple Up! For Military Kids" Day, to be held on Friday, April 13.

Let's make South Dakota "PURPLE" in support of our military youth.



Upcoming Events

Apr. 13—Purple Up for Military Kids Day

Apr. 21—Women Veterans Symposium and Health Fair—Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn—Rapid City

Apr. 24—SD Veterans Council—10:30 am—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls

Apr. 27-29—VABHHCS Women's Retreat—Fort Meade

Apr. 28—Military Order of the Purple Heart State Convention—Rapid City

May 8—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Rapid City—1981 E. Centre Street—10:00 am

May 9—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Pierre—520 S. Pierre Street—10:00 am

May 10—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Brookings—520 Main Avenue—10:00 am

May 11-13—DAV 73rd Annual Department of SD Convention—Brookings

May 11—Veterans Town Hall Meeting—Brookings

May 12—60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Display—Brookings

May 16—Vietnam Veterans of America State Convention—Pierre

May 19—Armed Forces Day

May 21-22—South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting—Pierre

May 28—Memorial Day

Jun. 7-10—VFW State Convention—Brookings

Jun. 9—Marine Corps League Department of SD Convention—Pierre

June 9-23 Golden Coyote Annual Training Exercise

Jun. 10-12—Dare to Dream Conference—Spearfish Holiday Inn

Jun. 14—Flag Day

Jun. 14-17—American Legion State Convention—Watertown

July 21-22—Sioux Falls Air Show

Aug. 27-29—VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre

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